



Synergy Fostering
MATCHING NEEDS WITH CARE™

Statement of Purpose

October 2016



Gurmeet Sodhi DipSW
Shobha Harris BSc, CQSW
John Barnes MSc



TABLE OF CONTENTS

SECTION ONE – WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?	5
HOW DO WE SHARE THIS WITH OTHERS?	5
CHILDRENS GUIDE	6
SECTION TWO – MEETING OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES	7
OUR AIMS	8
CORE VALUES	8
OBJECTIVES	9
SECTION THREE – ORGANISATION AND STAFF	10
THE COMPANY	11
OPERATIONAL STAFF	11
FINANCIAL VIABILITY	14
RECORD KEEPING	14
SIGNIFICANT EVENTS	15
SECTION FOUR – FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT AND REVIEW	16
RECRUITMENT STRATEGY	16
RECRUITMENT PROCESSING	16
REVIEW REPORTS	18
FOSTERING PANEL ACTIVITIES	19
SECTION FIVE – PLACEMENTS AND PROCESSES	20
FOSTER PARENT / CHILD PROFILE	20
PLACEMENT MATCHING	20
COMPLAINTS AND OUTCOMES	21
CHILD PROTECTION	22
SECTION SIX – FOSTER PARENT CARER SUPPORT	23
TRAINING	23
INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT	24
SUPPORT GROUPS	25
FOSTERING NETWORK	26
HANDLING ALLEGATIONS	26



PAYMENTS TO FOSTER CARERS	26
SEVERE ILLNESS IN FOSTER PARENTS	27
SECTION SEVEN – INDIVIDUALISED CHILD SERVICES	29
CLOTHING FOOD AND ALLOWANCES	30
CHILD HEALTH	30
CHILD SAFETY	31
EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES	33
PROMOTING CONTACT	34
MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION	34
STAYING PUT	35
SECTION 8 - CONCLUSION	36



WHAT IS THIS DOCUMENT ABOUT?

SECTION ONE

This document is designed to assist service users and other professionals to understand the service offered by Synergy Fostering, our ethos and how we apply ourselves to this and the legislative standards that we are required to meet.

In the left margin you will find references to documents that we hold ourselves to; legislative requirements and other standards (in red) and Synergy Fostering documents (in blue). The main text explains how we apply ourselves to the achievement of the best possible outcomes for children in these areas.

In addition, the left hand margin also includes various references to internal procedures that identify how we meet our obligations in practice. Within the agency these procedures are used to train and coach our team in the pursuit of excellent outcomes for children in our care.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 3 AND 4**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 16**

HOW DO WE SHARE THIS WITH OTHERS?

Synergy Fostering is required to publish a “Statement of Purpose” and “Children’s Guide” to our services. This identifies the aims and objectives of the agency so that this is clear for all our parents, foster parents, staff and responsible/placing authorities to read. It also helps us to make sure that we all try to meet the needs of children in our care.

A copy of this document:

- Has been made available to the Chief Inspector (Ofsted)
- Is on Synergy Fostering’s website

**WEBSITE:
WWW.SYNERGY-FOSTERING.CO.UK**



- Is made available to our staff, prospective or approved foster parents, children placed with a Synergy foster parent and the parents of (and any person who has parental responsibility for) that child

CD 02 CHILDRENS GUIDE TO SYNERGY FOSTERING

OUR CHILDREN'S GUIDE INCLUDES

- The agency's statement of purpose as it applies to the child
- An explanation how to access the Synergy Complaints' procedure
- The email and postal address together with the telephone number of the Chief Inspector (Ofsted)

We provide our Childrens Guide in three age related formats.

The Statement of Purpose and the Children's Guide are reviewed annually by the directors. If these documents are changed, a copy is sent to the Chief Inspector (Ofsted) within 28 days and a copy supplied to each approved foster parent and child / young person in placement (if age appropriate).



MEETING OUR AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

SECTION TWO

Synergy Fostering is an independent fostering agency established in May 2000 that seeks to provide for the needs of children in its care through:

- Directors and staff experienced and knowledgeable in many different aspects of social care provision, youth justice, child therapy and young people's development.
- Careful matching of foster parents and looked after children to provide the maximum opportunity for stability and child development in placements.
- Especially high level of support for our foster parents provided by dedicated passionate social work staff with real experience of foster care and specific training matched to the needs of placements.
- A collaborative approach with other agencies and placing authorities that encourages teamwork in pursuit of the best outcomes for children in care.
- A supportive and passionate team diverse in terms of age, gender, culture and ethnic origins.

The name "Synergy" Fostering was chosen to reflect our belief that working together towards a common goal will deliver a benefit to the child that is far greater than any one agency could deliver.

OUR AIMS

We aim to:

- work in the best interest of children ensuring no-one loses sight of why we have chosen to work with them.



- commit to best practice that may require challenging foster parents, our own staff or staff from placing authorities to ensure that the rights and needs of any individual child as prescribed in law, statutory guidance and accepted best professional practice are satisfied.
- provide stability to foster children and young people enabling them to reach their full potential.
- respect and promote the child or young person's racial, cultural, religious and linguistic background.
- consider the child's gender, sexuality and any disability when matching the child's needs in placement decisions.
- recruit Foster Parents from diverse backgrounds and with extensive skills and life experiences.
- share our experience and help each other to do the best for the children and young people in our care.
- show our children and young people the resilience and tolerance they need to build trusting relationships
- provide external and internal training for the development of Foster Parents.

CORE VALUES

Synergy Fostering believes that holding core values is essential to our work with children in Foster Care and for our Foster Parents.



- **People** - we will promote diversity in our organisation and everyone's opinion will be considered and valued. We will support the development and training of everyone who is involved with our organisation in support of the child.
- **Integrity** - It is always our intention to do what we say we will do, and to only commit to actions that we believe we can achieve.
- **Flexibility** - Our service will always be in the best interests of the child. Sometimes we will need to perform in a special way or take actions that are not in our own self interest but in the interests of the child.
- **Involvement** - It is our intention to take an inclusive approach to our work. Involving people in the decisions that we take and at each stage of the plans which we implement.
- **Safety** - The decisions and choices that we make will always be those that are most likely to result in safety for everyone who is involved in our organisation in particular the children in our care.

OBJECTIVES

As a social care enterprise, Synergy Fostering must add value to society through the results of our work.

Synergy Fostering provides young people with placements that enable them to flourish and reach their full potential in circumstances where that might not otherwise have occurred. Each child we assist in this way, will add more value to our society by reaching their full potential.

We maximize this potential through the high retention level and ever growing experience of our culturally diverse foster parents who can provide emergency, respite, short and longer term placements to:

- Unaccompanied minors



- Sibling Groups
- Young Parents and their Children
- Teenagers
- Young people on remand
- Young people with Complex needs

Our training is tailored to the current needs of our carers so that we can help the increasingly complex placements particularly therapeutic fostering for complex needs caring and additional needs such as autism or special dietary needs.

We will continue to extend the excellent record we have for placement retention by ensuring we match referred children to the most suitable foster parents and provide individual support for the placement needs.



OUR ORGANISATION AND STAFF

SECTION THREE

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 5,6,7,8,27**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 17**

THE ORGANISATION

Synergy Fostering is a limited company wholly owned by three directors. The directors are a combination of social workers with extensive experience across a range of service disciplines including children and families, fostering, mental health, elderly, probation and legal services and commercial experience from industry.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 25**

Gurmeet Sodhi is the agency decision maker with over 25 years' experience in social care whose management skills have been accredited at NVQ level 7.

Shobha Harris has over twenty years' experience in social care with NVQ level 7 and takes the role of Registered Manager at Synergy Fostering. Shobha Harris and Gurmeet Sodhi provide operational cover for absence and are not normally absent from the organisation at the same time. If this happens, a suitably qualified staff member would be appointed under the supervision of the company secretary.

John Barnes is the company secretary with more than 25 years' experience in commercial organisation general management. All of the directors have been involved with the organisation since 2000 when it was formed.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 32**

The organisation is based in Canada Water London SE16 in a gated and secured quarter called St Olav's Business Centre. The office is separated within that into secure offices.

**IN 01 17 BUSINESS
CONTINUITY PLAN**

Although some records our archived records are stored on paper, all records since 2010 are stored electronically in



multiple locations for added data protection. The contents of the office are fully insured and in the event of unforeseen circumstances there is a business continuity plan in operation. The plan is tested annually to quickly get the organisation functional again following major disruption.

Our organisation makes extensive use of IT systems including Microsoft Office, the internet and CHARMS database for fostering record keeping. Our IT systems are regularly backed up and redundant systems ensure that it can function in the event of equipment failure.

IN 03 15 INSURANCE

Foster Parents homes are all insured for the purpose of fostering and these policies are checked by the agency to ensure they cover the appropriate risks. The agency is responsible for all risks as a result of following our procedures.

FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 19,20

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 24

OPERATIONAL STAFF

The operational team is led by a Registered Manager with two supervising social workers. The manager is supervised by John Barnes and a suitably qualified social work trained independent person. All supervising social workers are registered social workers with prior experience of working in social care with children and families.

There are two administrators one of whom has specific responsibility for the fostering panel and the other, the financial aspects of the service. Both administrators have attended training in data protection. []

IN 06 13 STAFF RECRUITMENT

All staff are selected using appropriate, accessible selection techniques such as interviews, tests and group exercises. Their

IN 10 13 STATUTORY CHECKS POLICY

**IN 01 01 DBS
PROCEDURE**

suitability is also checked through a series of referencing approaches including DBS checks, job references and qualifications checks at a minimum.

**IN 10 10 REFERENCING
WHISTLEBLOWING**

Synergy Fostering has a clearly communicated whistleblowing policy that encourages all staff to contact suitable authorities should they believe that some form of mal-practice may be happening.

**IN 03 07 CODE OF
CONDUCT**

All staff participate in bi-weekly team meetings where the organisation prioritises workload and tracks progress of improvement activities and allocates resources in support of placements. There are staff employment procedures and policies in place to cover equal opportunities, health & safety, recruitment, maternity/paternity, code of conduct, absence, disciplinary and grievance.

**IN 06 08 MATERNITY
POLICY**

**IN 06 06 GRIEVANCE
PROCEDURE**

**IN 06 05 DISCIPLINARY
PROCEDURES**

**IN 06 01 ABSENCE
POLICY**

Staff are encouraged to report areas where they believe there could be ethical or legal issues at team meetings. Any such issues are recorded and addressed with urgency.

**IN 02 01 ESCALATION
POLICY**

In general, staff are encouraged to resolve issues locally but where there is no resolution and issues remain unaddressed there is an escalation procedure staff follow to gain management attention that will lead to formal complaint if appropriate.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION
POLICY**

Social work staff are also involved in regular supervision which is formally recorded and they also have annual appraisals which include the views of children in care where they provide them.

**IN 03 11 EQUAL
OPPORTUNITIES POLICY**

Prospective Foster Parent Assessments are carried out by assessors with relevant foster care experience and all



**IN 01 14 FOSTER CARER
TRAINING**

assessments are overseen by the Registered Manager. Formal training is undertaken in assessment techniques.

All staff undertake annual training needs assessment as part of their reviews and appropriate training to develop in the areas identified has been planned. Staff are encouraged to attend internal and external training courses, so that they continue to develop knowledge and skills and are conversant with current guidance and legislation.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 25**

All staff members have role descriptions identifying their responsibilities and limits of authority and lines of accountability.

**IN 09 01 – IN 09 11
JOB DESCRIPTIONS**

There is an internal procedure management and audit system that includes both social work and business processes that ensures staff are trained in the activities they undertake. This is used as a part of the induction process to bring new staff into the organisation.

The audit and review system ensures that procedures are regularly reviewed against the National Minimum Standards and other regulatory requirements and that they are fit for purpose internally.

Records and data are regularly reviewed by the agency to ensure that the evidence is in compliance with the agency policies.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 20,21,22,30**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 18**

Ofsted reports from previous inspections are available to staff. Ofsted inspections from other agencies are regularly reviewed to establish potential areas for improvement in the agency as they are published.



In addition we are in support of developing the Social Work profession and as a result to date have provided eight social work student placements. We work in partnership with Brunel University, who have selected these students.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY

Synergy Fostering has managed its financial affairs effectively since it began. In fact the organisation has never needed to secure funds from any other source than its own means. Our financial processes are all proceduralised. Our accounts are audited by a qualified accountant each year who is kept informed of the future direction of the organisation.

IN 04 01 – 17 FINANCIAL PROCEDURES

In the event of closure Synergy Fostering accepts its responsibilities to provide an ongoing solution that is in the interests of the children placed.

FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 22, 26 30-33

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 26

RECORD KEEPING

Records are maintained by the agency and its foster parents that are subject to data protection and confidentiality policies. These policies are shared with all staff to ensure that they understand their obligations.

PS 06 01 DATA PROTECTION POLICY

IN 03 09 CONFIDENTIALITY

Records are maintained in a way that enables others to understand the situation when reading that information at a later date. Regular checks of records are undertaken to establish the quality of entries and to provide feedback to those writing the records if there needs to be improvement.

IN 03 26 RECORDING PROCEDURE CARERS

IN 03 39 RECORDING PROCEDURE CHILDREN

Where appropriate records are shared with those involved during the writing process so that they understand what is being written about them.

IN 03 21 LIFE HISTORY WORK



**IN 01 02 ELECTRONIC
FILING PROTOCOL**

We have an electronic system for recording casework which enables multiple staff to update appropriate records and for automated reminders of statutory obligations.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 36 SCH 7**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 29**

SIGNIFICANT EVENTS

The agency has procedures for handling the notification and management of significant events. All staff are encouraged to report all events that are abnormal even if these may not be considered significant enough to escalate further by the Registered Manager. All events are recorded and those which need them are investigated and communicated to the relevant authorities.

**IN 03 20 NOTIFICATION
OF SIGNIFICANT EVENTS**



FOSTER PARENT RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT & REVIEW

SECTION FOUR

FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 26,27,28

NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 13

RECRUITMENT STRATEGY

In order to attract potential foster parents to the agency we have identified media that have proved to be effective. While we continue to invest in new and different methods of connecting with potential foster parents such as social media and various events; the majority of our investment of resource is focused on:

- Facebook engagement
- Incentivising existing foster parents to identify other friends / relatives who might wish to foster
- Some face to face recruitment at local events such as community activities and religious groups
- Our website

We regularly monitor the effectiveness of our recruitment strategy in terms of number, type and quality of applicant to establish where we need to make changes in tactics.

IN 07 12 APPROVAL OF
FOSTER PARENTS

RECRUITMENT PROCESSING

There is a defined procedure for assessing prospective foster parents:

- All new fostering enquiries are screened to ensure that there is no obvious reason why individuals should not foster and can offer sufficient accommodation and time to provide care.



- Once basic suitability has been established, an information pack will be sent to the prospective foster parent.
- We will arrange to make a home visit and establish further information about suitability and aptitude of the applicant. This is normally completed within two weeks if the applicant agrees.
- The prospective foster parent will be invited to participate in the Skills to Foster course during this time. Observations from the training are used to inform the assessment process.
- An application form is issued when the applicant's suitability has been assured at this stage.
- A decision is taken by the agency decision maker whether this prospective foster parent is suitable for the next stage; statutory & health checks.
- If statutory checks are successful, a formal assessment is begun within ten days if not already started.

After this point in the process, should any aspect of the assessment lead the agency to believe that the applicant is not suitable to foster, a report will be presented to Fostering Panel to explain the reasons for ending the assessment.

Assessments are completed using a structured Form F template. Assessors are supervised by the Registered Manager. Assessment will typically involve a number of visits to a carer's home to obtain information about her/his childhood and experience of being parented, current lifestyle, skills and experience of looking after children.

Prospective foster parents are provided with information about the panel review process and their part in this activity.



A 'health & safety check' of the applicant's home is also undertaken and includes a risk assessment of any relevant pets.

When the above process is completed the assessor prepares a report for the panel, which will include the Form F and supporting evidence that illustrate the applicant's suitability to foster (including outcomes of checks and references undertaken).

The draft Form F report is shared with the applicant, who signs to confirm s/he has read the report. All applicants are invited to attend the panel.

The panel will then make recommendations about the suitability of the applicants to become foster parents and the types and age range of children who should be placed with them. Panel recommendations are passed on to the applicants by the panel chairperson when prospective applicants attend.

Recommendations of the panel are then referred to the Agency Decision Maker and written confirmation of the agency's decision is sent within 5 five working days .

IN 05 01 PANEL APPEALS

Prospective foster parents can appeal against a decision within 28 days following the internal procedure or directly to the Independent Review Mechanism (IRM).

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 26,27,28**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 13**

REVIEW REPORTS

Existing Foster Parents have an annual appraisal, referred to as an Annual Review. Review reports are submitted in advance of the meeting for the foster parent to review and the meeting is chaired by an Independent Reviewing Officer. The report contains recommendations for development and evidence of



suitability for the foster parent to continue fostering. The report is a balanced review of both achievements and development areas.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 22**

Annual Review reports are referred to the panel twelve months after approval and then on a three yearly basis after that. Each annual review is considered by the Agency Decision Maker and may be referred to panel before the three yearly review if deemed necessary. Foster Parents who have been subject to allegations are also reviewed at the first panel following conclusion of the investigation.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 14,20,21**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 19,23-29**

FOSTERING PANEL ACTIVITIES

The agency has a panel membership central list that includes:

- An independent chairperson with substantial experience as a manager of fostering and adoption services and chairing panels
- A servicing policeman who is the son of a foster parent (serves as vice chair)
- A director of Synergy (who is the Panel Advisor)
- An adult who was formerly placed in residential and foster care
- A Supervising Social Worker with more than three years post qualifying experience employed by Synergy
- Two foster parents with 20 years of experience from another authority
- An Educational Psychologist who works for a London Borough with secondary school age children
- A practicing Psychotherapist who works in the National Health Service
- Panel Administrator and minute taker



Panel training is undertaken annually, the content of which is discussed in the panel to include aspects of development that the panel feel they would benefit from.

Our panel procedure explains the constitution and operation of the meeting. The procedure explains how quality assurance of reports is maintained. It also stipulates minute taking and preparation routines that meet the necessary standards.



PLACEMENTS & PROCESSES

SECTION FIVE

FOSTER PARENT/ CHILD PROFILE

At the end of September 2016, the agency had 35 foster parent families from diverse backgrounds based in and around the London area. This comprised of 9 white families, 7 Black African family, 8 Caribbean families, 5 Pakistani families, 2 Indian families, 2 African /white families, 1 Indian/white family, 1 other ethnicity .

There were 46 children in placement; 21 Males and 25 Females, their age and background varied from under 1 to 27 years of age.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11,17**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 11,15,31**

PLACEMENT MATCHING

Synergy Fostering believe that matching needs with care is the most important part of establishing stable placements. We put significant effort into establishing the most accurate picture of potential placements so that we can find the match within our foster parent population. We look for connections and common ground from which foster parents and placed children can find trust and understanding that ultimately leads to child development and stability.

IN 07 07 PLACEMENTS

Should children need to move on it is important that this is done in the interests of the child and procedures exist for managing the movement of children to other placements and settings.



IN 03 22 PARENT AND BABY PLACEMENTS

Special consideration is given to Parent and Child Placements due to the modified responsibilities for their care. These are explained in a separate procedure.

IN 01 16 EVALUATION OF SERVICE PROVIDED

After a placement is completed the agency seeks feedback on the results of the placement from those involved and uses this to improve it for future users.

COMPLAINTS & OUTCOMES

There were no substantiated complaints of the agency in the last year September 2016 and very few in the history of the organisation.

IN 03 08 COMPLAINTS

Synergy Fostering has a complaints procedure which sets out how complaints can be made by or on behalf of children placed with any of our foster parents and how such complaints will be dealt with. There is also a child friendly version of the procedure provided to children to encourage them to voice concerns without fear.

CD 03 CHILDRENS COMPLAINT LEAFLET

The Complaints procedure provides for informal resolution at an early stage, sufficient independence, includes contact details for Ofsted and is made known to everyone working in the organisation, parents of children placed and where age appropriate children themselves.

We have a mechanism in place to capture the positive outcomes that our young people in care experience. This enables us to recognize the good work of foster parents and other members of the organisation and to celebrate the successes of the young people in care. While for some children relatively modest advances should be considered as positive outcomes there are some which are more remarkable. Some examples of recent successes include:



- Five young people have attended university courses
- One young person who previously did not attend school has completed 11 GCSE level passes including a BTEC distinction.
- Another young person has completed four BTEC Higher level subjects including a distinction.
- Another young person was able to attend football academy at a well-known football club and one is involved with a local rock band.
- One young person has participated an international Robot Wars competition held in the USA.
- Another young person was able to meet with his extended birth family in Jamaica.
- Some children attend classes in Karate, horse riding and other sports and pastimes such as swimming and air cadets.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11,12,30**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 22**

CHILD PROTECTION

Synergy Fostering has comprehensive child protection policies which are shared with the network of local safeguarding officers at placing local authorities. The Local Safeguarding Children’s Board and Local Authority Designated Officer in our home borough of Southwark have had the opportunity to comment on our procedure. We have appointed a safeguarding worker in the agency and our Social Work Director is responsible for child protection in the agency and manages allegations and investigations.



FOSTER PARENT SUPPORT

SECTION SIX

FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 17, 28

NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 20

IN 01 14 FOSTER CARER
TRAINING

TRAINING

Synergy Fostering believes that quality training is at the heart of stable placements providing ongoing and appropriate training opportunities for all its staff, panel members and foster parents.

Immediately post approval Foster Parents undertake the TSD workbook activities and a Synergy Fostering induction workshop designed to quickly build skills and understanding of the agency practice. New foster parents have a more experienced local “buddy” allocated to them to provide some additional support and encouragement through the basic training.

In addition to the induction training there are a suite of courses provided for all foster parents that form a basic grounding in the main aspects of fostering. Foster Parents are expected to keep their skills up to date by regularly refreshing their learning in these areas.

Further more advanced courses are offered for more specialist training where the agency has identified additional types of care that are necessary to address the referrals received eg Remand training, Autism and managing difficult behaviour courses.

Existing Foster Parents with over one year since approval have all completed the TSD qualification and new foster parents are encouraged to complete this within 12 months of joining the organisation.



Foster Parents and the agency keep records of their training and experiential learning so that appropriate recognition is received for training completion.

Foster Parents training needs are reviewed as a whole on an annual basis across the organisation to establish the future programme of events. The event programme including all courses available is published to foster parents from time to time.

It is also recognised that foster parents sometimes have previous skills upon which to draw, or will receive training from elsewhere e.g. from being employed in other areas of social care. Every effort is made to ensure that these skills are recognised, recorded and transferred. In some circumstances foster parents will be able to share these skills with others in the agency.

All existing foster parents had gained a CWDC Certificate of Successful Completion for the Training, Support and Development Standards for Foster Care as required.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 17**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 21**

INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Each foster parent has an allocated named supervising social worker who provides regular supervision. If the needs of a child / young person on placement or court proceedings require it, this frequency may be increased.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION
POLICY**

It is the responsibility of the supervising social worker to assess the needs of the placement with regard to the foster parents and the child / young person placed. This assessment will inform decisions about appropriate training for foster parents.



There is a member of the fostering team 'on call' via a mobile telephone at *all* times when the office is closed (including week-ends and bank holidays).

Foster parents are encouraged to care for children in placement as their own children and are not expected to take respite during placements except in exceptional circumstances. However, it is recognised that foster parents may wish to take breaks from service from time to time between placements.

Foster Parents are provided with a Foster Care Handbook containing all relevant materials from the agency including a copy of this document. Foster Parents are expected to refer to the handbook to provide guidance on the agencies approach to various issues and situations.

SUPPORT GROUPS

Support groups take place every three months.

The support group is for foster parents to discuss issues arising from their fostering experience and for the organisation to listen to the areas of development foster parents want from the organisation. It also provides an opportunity to pass on information about the organisation and any planned developments.

At previous support group meetings topics have included training programme development, support needs to enable complex needs placements and fostering allowance.

FOSTERING NETWORK

Synergy Fostering are members of Fostering Network as an agency and meet the cost of individual membership for all foster parents so they get quarterly magazines and updates.



**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11,12,17,30,36**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 22**

**ALLEGATIONS AGAINST
FOSTER CARERS**

HANDLING ALLEGATIONS

Foster parents and staff understand the importance of reporting situations where children's safety might be threatened. The agency understands its obligations to report such incidents to appropriate authorities.

All allegations will be investigated and the agency will provide whatever co-operation is necessary to investigate allegations thoroughly and efficiently. We will take care to make sure that the Foster Parent is supported through these difficult investigations.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 17, 27**

**IN 03 19 FOSTERING
ALLOWANCES 2012**

PAYMENTS TO FOSTER PARENTS

Foster parents are paid allowances and competency rewards in line with the placement of children in their care. The payments are reviewed regularly to ensure that they represent suitable payments for the activities undertaken.

**IN 03 39 FOSTER
PARENT COMPETENCY
ASSESSMENT
FRAMEWORK**

Payments are made one week in arrears directly to the foster parent. Changes to placements are reflected as quickly as possible in foster parents payments. Guidance is provided on the use of monies in support of the allowance structure.

**IN 03 30 SEVERE ILLNESS
IN FOSTER CARE**

SEVERE ILLNESS IN FOSTER PARENTS

From time to time foster parents will suffer severe illness and arrangements will have to be made to accommodate this. In all circumstances the needs of the child must come first, but this



does not mean the child will be removed as a result of the assessment that needs to take place.



INDIVIDUALISED SERVICES FOR CHILDREN

SECTION SEVEN

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 2**

Each child / young person is treated as a unique individual. The care provided for each child is documented in the care plan, recorded in the foster parent's logs and discussed during supervision to reinforce the importance of positive outcomes for the children in care.

**IN 03 32 SUPERVISION
POLICY FOR FOSTER
CARERS**

Supervision is structured around the following "Every Child Matters" five outcomes:

- Being Healthy
- Staying Safe
- Enjoying & Achieving
- Making a Positive Contribution
- Achieving Economic Well-being

We respect and put each individual's physical, emotional, cultural, intellectual and spiritual needs ahead of other considerations.

We respect the likes and dislikes of each child.

We encourage individual interests and talents through the provision of a range of activities.

We aim to maintain a settled and stable environment for each young person to thrive in.

**IN 07 11 PREPARING
YOUNG PEOPLE FOR
INDEPENDANCE**

We support and encourage each young person to develop their full potential at the pace that is most appropriate for them, including independent living skills for older children.



We ensure that foster parents work in partnership with the child / young person, their family and other professionals.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11**

We develop nurturing, trusting and caring relationships between foster parents and the child / young person.

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 12**

We encourage a collaborative approach based upon the care plan of the placing authority between foster parent and birth parents for the benefit of the child / young person.

**IN 03 23 PAYMENT
BREAKDOWN**

CLOTHING, FOOD AND ALLOWANCES

Children are encouraged to participate in the choice and preparation of food (if appropriate to age and understanding) providing the child with opportunity for involvement with food related decisions.

Children and young people are provided with a clothing allowance and pocket money to spend in collaboration with the foster parent's guidance.

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 15**

CHILD HEALTH

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 6,7**

Synergy Fostering foster parents are responsible for ensuring that they make the health of any child in their care a high priority. Promoting the health and wellbeing of children and foster families in general often leads to positive outcomes in other areas of the child's life.

**IN 03 05 CHILD'S
HEALTH AND SAFETY
POLICY**

Specifically we expect:

- the child to be immediately registered with a GP, dentist and optician or other specialist (as appropriate)
- appropriate frequency of checkups are completed



**IN 03 06 CHILD
MEDICATION AND FIRST
AID**

- the placing authority to ensure that a health assessment is undertaken at intervals of 6 months for those under 5 and annually in the case of children aged 5 and over
- safe storage of medicines in the foster home, accessible only by those for whom intended

All our foster parents are qualified in first aid and new foster parents are enrolled on a training course as soon as practical after approval.

**IN 03 08 ALCOHOL AND
DRUGS**

Children and Young People are alerted to the issues associated with drugs, alcohol and smoking. All our foster parents promote a smoke free atmosphere as being the norm in their homes.

IN 03 31 SMOKING

**CAREPLANNING
REGULATIONS 2010
SCHEDULE 1**

Foster parents are provided with as full a description as possible of the health needs of the child and clear guidance about the decisions delegated to the foster parent and where consent for medical treatment needs to be obtained. A written 'health care plan' is kept as part of the care plan for each child

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 11,12**

NATIONAL MINIMUM

CHILD SAFETY

Child safe care is central to the organisation. Every member of staff who has access to young people in care is trained in the following responsibilities:

**IN 03 04 CHILD
PROTECTION**

- Treating children and young people with respect and dignity
- Ensuring that their right to privacy and confidentiality is upheld
- Keeping children and young people safe from abuse
- Keeping children and young people safe from accidental injury or death



- Recognising the vulnerability of children and young people and their susceptibility to bullying and discrimination
- Appreciating the risks of sexual or labour exploitation
- Observing the behaviour of young people for signs for influence from extremism.

Further safeguards are provided by the following activities and procedures:

IN 03 39 SAFE CARE AND POSITIVE BEHAVIOUR

IN 03 02 CHILD MISSING FROM CARE

IN 07 02 MANAGING ALLEGATIONS

IN 06 13 STAFF RECRUITMENT

IN 03 01 HEALTH AND SAFETY

CT 10 FOSTER CARE AGREEMENT

IN 07 03 KEEPING CHILDREN SAFE ON THE INTERNET

- Procedures on acceptable measures of control, restraint and discipline of foster children
- Procedure on the steps to be taken if a child is missing from a foster parent's home without permission
- A written policy on safeguarding those placed with foster parents from abuse or neglect including procedures to be followed in the event of an allegation
- Each supervising social worker will ensure s/he visits the child in placement regularly and two un-announced visits are undertaken each year.
- All staff are recruited according to strict policies regarding DBS and other checks as well as their experience of child care and understanding the needs of looked after children
- All households are subject to annual 'health & safety checks'
- Unrelated children are not permitted to share bedrooms
- The 'foster care agreement' clearly outlines expectations of foster parents, including the fact that corporal punishment and other humiliating forms of discipline are prohibited
- Foster parents have comprehensive written guidance on the safe use of the internet



IN 06 03 BULLYING

- There is written information and training available concerning the vulnerability of young people, their susceptibility to bullying and dangers of abuse by sexual exploitation.
- All foster parents are aware of the policy on safe caring and risk assessment.
- All placements are carefully matched, using all available information.
- There is specific advice available to safeguard children from different kinds of bullying such as cyber-bullying.
- Synergy foster parents are aware of the particular difficulties that may be faced by young people who are placed trans-racially or trans-culturally. In addition, we can provide interpreters in order to promote the wishes and feelings of these young people.

FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 16,

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 7,8

EDUCATION AND ACTIVITIES

All foster parents are expected to offer an environment in which education and learning are valued and the foster parent establishes an expectation of regular school attendance. There are a number of significant educational achievements that children in our care have achieved with the guidance of our foster parents.

IN 03 35 EDUCATION

We take all reasonable measures to ensure the child / young person has an appropriate education provision available, including undertaking significant travel commitments to achieve this.

We help the child / young person to develop confidence, social skills and an ability to select and participate in interests and activities of their choice. There are numerous examples of hobbies and leisure activities undertaken by children in our



care including karate, music, swimming, horse riding, football, air cadets, Metropolitan Police Boot camp and summer camp activities.

Foster parents liaise with schools; attend parents evenings, open days, in conjunction with birth parents when appropriate and as identified in the placement agreement.

Foster parents are given appropriate support in order to ensure that the child or young person is encouraged and has opportunities to attain her/his full potential.

Foster parents are given support when children are not on the roll of an identified school in order to provide educational opportunities and potential school places.

FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 16,

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 1,3,7

IN 03 28 CONTACT WITH PARENTS AND SIBLINGS

IN 03 17 DELEGATED AUTHORITY

FOSTERING SERVICES REGULATIONS, 2011 SECTION 16,

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARD 1,3,7

PROMOTING CONTACT

The agency encourages its foster parents to participate and facilitate contact unless this is not deemed appropriate on child protection grounds. Contact is discussed during the placement matching process to establish how and whether the expectations and interests of the foster parent can be accommodated.

Foster Parents will accept responsibility for some additional decision making as detailed in the delegated authority schedule agreed with the child's social worker.

MAKING A POSITIVE CONTRIBUTION

Synergy Fostering ensures that foster parents act on their responsibilities to include young people in their decision making:



**IN 03 03 CHILD OR
YOUNG PERSONS
REVIEW REPORT**

- Seek the views, wishes and feelings of children / young people and act upon them unless contrary to their interests or adversely affecting other household members.
- Provide the child / young person with opportunities to develop mutually beneficial friendships with peers.
- Provide the child with a variety of experiences and opportunities e.g. trips; overnight stays etc which will develop self-esteem.

STAYING PUT

**FOSTERING SERVICES
REGULATIONS, 2011
SECTION 16,**

**NATIONAL MINIMUM
STANDARD 1,3,7**

IN 03 12 STAYING PUT

The agency recognises the need to enable children in care to remain with their foster parents beyond the age of 18 if they and their foster parents wish for this arrangement to continue.

We will work with placing authorities to establish a framework of agreements and payments that fully support the needs of the young person without under valuing the activities of the foster parent or the agency.



CONCLUSION

SECTION EIGHT

The Synergy Fostering Team are dedicated to the needs of young people in our care and we seek to ensure in the first instance they are encouraged to become a thriving individual who can play a valuable part in society. We also realise that we are an employment organisation and we seek to empower and inspire our team to do their best work in the pursuit of our goals. We also recognise the need to satisfy our other statutory stakeholders and strive to meet all of the regulations and standards set for us by legitimate authorities.

